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Adam

Adam Ifans Editor
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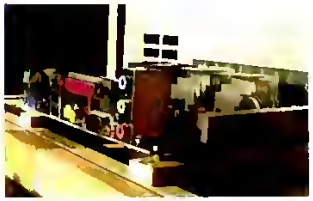

Entertainment
We pack it with stuff that matters: from filesharing to modding and overclocking.

Tech

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VADIM FUSION CEPHEUS Q80

The sexiest rig ever? Almost certainly **1** Inside Core 2 Extreme QX6700 680SLI Mobo dual 8800GTX **2** Custom liquid cooling kit with UV reactive tubing and fluid (cools CPU GPUs chipset) **3** Custom hydro-cut side panel. www.vadim.co.uk

Cool runnings: Vadim's hand-built uber rig comprises the most beautiful and professional water-cooling system we've yet seen. Each section of pipework is wrapped in green UV-reactive cabling, which brings the whole fearful, noodling colossus to life. Every component is top-of the range, too. In all this dream setup will set you back a cool £5,000

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WHAT'S NEW... EXPERT GUIDES TO YOUR FAVOURITE GAMES – WE'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO CRACK THOSE TRICKY MISSIONS

"ANYONE UP FOR BARON 45?"

Every issue, we dissect one aspect of a game in minute detail. Here, **Andy McGregor** explains how to crack one of *WoW*'s toughest quests...

Read the full guide in the all-new PCFormat Out now!

"Completing Baron 45 provides access to a set of Rare and Epic armour that would be otherwise unobtainable"

There are several timed events in *World of Warcraft* and Blizzard came up with a real cracker called Baron 45 with the introduction of the Tier 0.5 armour sets.

Baron 45 is a fairly time-consuming quest that takes place in the Eastern Plaguelands. Your quest is to defeat twisted aristo Baron Rivendare of Stratholme in less than 45 minutes – a quest designed with the casual gamer in mind because completing it allows fairly easy access to a good set of Rare and Epic armour that would be otherwise unobtainable. Introducing this event into the game also gives hardcore players a challenge. There's the opportunity to improve teamwork skills and the kudos of completing the quest in a new record time.

There are no special requirements for undertaking a 45 minute Baron run – every time you enter the instance and get through the first few sets of skeletons and zombies, your party is given the Baron's Ultimatum, which appears as a debuff. The point is to save Ysida, who is held captive in the Baron's chamber, from being slain. She's obviously important to someone somewhere, but for now all we're interested in is getting that armour quest complete so that we can move onto the next stage.

Interface mods

Interface mods can help you beat the Baron. The majority of those shown above are used for clarity so you know exactly what's going on when.

A replacement unit frame mod [1] from part of Nurfed UI's compilation provides customisable frames while also showing target's target and target's targets' target. Handy for tanks keeping track of who has a mob's attention. [2] Bongos Action Bars replaces the standard Blizzard bars mainly for saving space and having more accessible buttons. This is useful for keeping as many potions easily accessible as possible. [3] Autobar helps to position useful items – potions, bandages, food and water, for example – so they're instantly clickable and you needn't search for them in your bags. [4] Elkano's BuffBar shows all buffs and debuffs on your character with a countdown until they're expired – very easy to check if you have all available buffs in a party situation.

All available through a UI package called Desecrated UI available from www.curse-gaming.com

The sheer level of detail the *Unreal* engine can muster is simply staggering. It's all down to the UT engine, which allows artists to get busy without worrying about speddy code. The end result is a game that looks the absolute nuts

2007 games special

RELEASE DATE/ SUMMER 2007 (ETA)

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2007

WHAT'S NEW...
SPECTACULAR PREVIEWS OF UPCOMING GAME RELEASES, WITH THE BIGGEST SCREENSHOTS IN TOWN!

Vehicle based combat was a huge hit in *UT2004* and there's plenty of mobile mayhem to savour in *UT2007*. Looks like the Hellbender's been well and truly nerfed for starters!

"UT2007 positively oozes atmosphere and class"

Now imagine this at high resolution pace on a nice big monitor. Oh yes

VITAL STATISTICS

Publisher Midway **Developer** Epic Games
Genre First Person Shooter **Web** www.unreal.com
Did you know? The new UnrealEd enables players to drop in and test new missions while they're building them – a bit like *Far Cry's Sandbox*

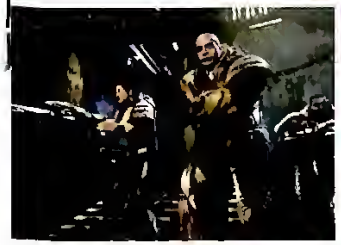
WHAT'S THE STORY?

An overdue return to the *Unreal* universe, *UT2007* promises to deliver more *UT2004*-style vehicular combat wrapped up in an engine that devs are queuing up to code on.

The war between *Quake* and *Unreal* that started in the Nineties is still going strong, *Quake* has gone all tactical, choosing to fight its war in *Enemy Territory*, but *Unreal* has also evolved and after a successful move into vehicular combat with *UT2004*, *UT2007* will bring more mobile mayhem to the battlefield

The *Unreal 3* engine behind it should remain the daddy of PC FPS engines for the foreseeable. More than ever before *UT2007* pushes the engine beneath it as a platform. The old war between id and Epic engines may not be over for good, but *Unreal* has this round of the battle sewn up. *Unreal 3* engine is founded on easy content creation, giving more power to artists and designers. Apps within the *UnrealEd* suite enable designers to fiddle with the guts of the game without touching any code. As a result *UT2007* oozes atmosphere and class. It's all a result of the devs being able to concentrate on art, rather than cold mathematics ■ James Carey

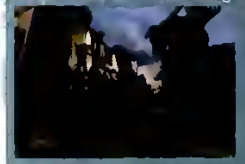
BUZZMETER 'Classic in waiting' 9



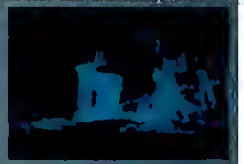
Yes, yes the engine's very clever. Now where do I get one of these enormous guns?

Geometry Wars

Witness the power of the *Unreal 3* engine. According to Epic, the image on the left uses over 100 million triangles to display all that normal mapping, whereas the underlying structure on the right reveals that the scene is [illegible] under 500,000 triangles. Beautiful, it's skin deep then



FULLY RENDERED SCENE
100 million triangles for normal, detailed mapping



WIREFRAME STRUCTURE
Under 500,000 triangles used in the entire scene

YOUR SAY...

Unreal has been a staple on our LANs for the last few years, with *Unreal Tournament 2004* still making it onto our playlists. From what I've read and seen of *UT2007*, the new vehicles and game modes should make it something special. The biggest thing I'm looking forward to (other than the walkers, of course) is the destruction you can dish out to the landscape. That really promises to add a great deal to the game

GRAPHICS SUPERTEST

Choosing a new3D card is almost as confusing as selecting a mobile phone talk plan. Jeremy Laird cuts through the crap and reveals the best cards for every budget

WHAT'S NEW...
IN-DEPTH TESTS OF THE LATEST PERFORMANCE KIT, WITH DETAILED BENCHMARKS AND NO-NONSENSE VERDICTS

Here's a frightening factoid for you to fathom. The recent growth of 3D rendering performance on the PC has been so extraordinarily rampant, a powerful desktop video card now has more pixel-pushing grunt than many military flight simulators in use today. Give it another five years and we'll all have enough 3D power on our desktops to wipe out a Hollywood-class movie rendering farm. With any luck, we'll be able to shelve all those ghastly, preening actors and do the whole job digitally ourselves.

But can you have too much of a good thing? Over the past 18 months or so the two big noises in PC graphics hardware, ATI and NVIDIA, have been slicing the video card market into ever smaller slithers. New video chipsets have sprung up at almost every price point, from £50 budget cards to £400 monsters and everything in between. While that's clearly good for consumer choice, the downside is the chipset-infested jungle for PC enthusiasts to navigate. Such is the proliferation of pixel pushers, hacking through in search of the best bargains is a full time job. Our job in fact.

Making matters worse, there's a huge array of features and technology to wrap your grey matter around. Oh yes, pixel pipes, fragment shaders, vertex units, bus widths, memory size, shader models, multi-GPU capabilities and content encryption support are just a few of the fearsome features you'll need to get to grips with.

Start your engines

Where, therefore, to begin? The current differences twixt NVIDIA and ATI is a good place to start. That's particularly true with NVIDIA currently in transition from its GeForce 7 series boards to the new GeForce 8 family. But let's put the latter to one side for a moment, because the 7 series remains the most successful family of 3D GPUs cards ever. Closely based on the 6 series family that preceded it, GeForce 7 video chips essentially carried over the same DirectX 9 feature set. Granted, NVIDIA improved high dynamic range (HDR) rendering performance over the 6 series cards but the inability to combine HDR with edge-smoothing anti-aliasing remains. But in terms of anisotropic filtering quality – and hence the clarity of objects and surfaces viewed at oblique angles – GeForce 7 series GPUs are a much of a muchness with the 6 series. What's more, in many regards, the 7 series is a thoroughly old-fashioned family of graphics chips, complete with a traditional pipeline architecture, discreet pixel and vertex units and a conventional memory controller. But that's not necessarily bad news. What the 7 series does offer is a straightforward product range with ever more pixel pipes and vertex units as you climb up the ladder.

"IN FIVE YEARS WE'LL HAVE MORE 3D POWER THAN A HOLLYWOOD RENDER FARM"

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GIGABYTE NVIDIA GEFORCE 7600 GS

MSI NX7600 GEFORCE 7600 GT

SAPPHIRE ATI RADEON X1800 GTO

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FOXCONN NVIDIA GEFORCE 7900 GS

ATI RADEON X1900 XT 256MB

SAPPHIRE ATI RADEON X1950 PRO

ASUS NVIDIA GEFORCE 8800GTS

NVIDIA GEFORCE 7950 GX2

ATI RADEON X1950 XTX

NVIDIA GEFORCE 8800 GTX

CLASSY CASES

Eight component-hugging PC cases tested and rated...

Thank god PCs are finally cool. Ten years ago, your choice of chassis was limited to off-white and beige. If you were lucky you'd find a black one, but you'd pay through the nose for something so exotic. Hah!

Nowadays, designer cases are two a penny and prices have plummeted. Its quite easy to pick up a stylish case for a song, and some of the pricier cases on the market are gorgeous, with sturdy design and quality materials. The Cooler Master Cavalier in our test is prime example of classy affordable design.

Finally, opting for a bundled power supply with your chassis is no longer really worth doing. With the demands of today's thirsty components, you're far better off shelling out for a branded PSU, rather than the generic grey box OEM variety that you'll see given away 'free' in cheaper cases. The majority of these don't even have six pin PCI-E power blocks. Rubbish!

How we tested...

Looks and build quality are vital, but so is ease of use. We prefer screwless cases, and if a chassis is a bitch work with, we cry hot tears of frustration. Intelligent craftsmanship always wins out.

1 ENLIGHT EN-2411 £38

Enlight
uk.enlightcorp.com
2xUSB headphone and mic
2x optical
2x hard drive
No

This micro-ATX case is cheap and almost cheerful. The 350W power supply that comes bundled with the case will no doubt be removed straight away and replaced with something infinitely superior, but the case is sturdily built and has decent ventilation built into the side panel. However the side-facing 3.5-inch drive bays are problematic – there's a horrible overhang on the front that prevents you slipping in a hard drive into either of those slots.

PCFormat Verdict 66

2 PANDORA CA3030 £41

Enermax
www.enermax.co.uk
2xUSB headphone and mic
4x optical
4x hard drive
Clips

One of the cheapest cases in this month's test this feels like it might have been produced by melting down a thousand Kinder Egg toys. That aside, it's actually reasonably good looking. Concessions have been made to usability because there are screwless catches on the rear, but unfortunately one of them required approximately 30 seconds of biro-chiselling to pop free. Still, if you're just in the market for something to house your PC, you could do a whole lot worse.

PCFormat Verdict 74

3 LIAN LI PC-201B £199

Lian Li
www.vadim.co.uk
2xUSB, 1x FireWire headphone and mic
7x optical
12x hard drive
Thumbscrews, internal clips

This is a giant, immovable totem of an enclosure and its party trick is having a massive array of 12 hard drive bays and seven spaces for 5.25-inch drives on the outside. Nifty brushed aluminium makes an appearance once again and the case is predictably spacious inside. The only downside is that you pay for such enormity – this wallet-pummelling heavy hitter weighs in at just under £200. Its a lot of money unless you really do need the space.

PCFormat Verdict 84

4 COOLER MASTER CAVALIER £45

Cooler Master
www.vadim.co.uk
2xUSB headphone and mic
5x optical
4x hard drive
Thumbscrews, internal clips

Yeah, its knocking on, but the Cooler Master Cavalier is still one of the classiest cases around. Its screwless design ensures faffless upgrading, and the door is reassuringly chunky. The Cavalier has also been on the market a while now, meaning it can had for around £45 – possibly even less – if you shop around like a crazed ninja. We prefer it in black, as shown here, but brushed aluminium is also an option.

PCFormat Verdict 86

5 ZEN SILENT COOL £28

Akasa
www.vadim.co.uk
2xUSB headphone and mic
4x optical, 4x hard drive
Thumbscrews, internal clips

The Zen comes equipped with two 120mm fans and a CPU side vent to aid in the 'Silent Cool' part of its title. Strangely the front fan isn't really supported by the case fascia – there are no vents up front, leaving the poor thing sucking uselessly on plastic. Nonetheless, all things considered, this is a seriously cheap ATX case with excellent quick release fittings on the 5.25-inch bays, so getting at your PC's innards is certainly nice and straightforward.

PCFormat Verdict 73

Gold Award

6 LIAN LI PC-S80 £188

Manufacturer: Lian Li
URL: www.vadim.co.uk
Front ports: 2xUSB, 1x FireWire headphone and mic
Drive bays: 4x optical, 4x hard drive
Quick release: Thumbscrews

This weighty case screams quality – the airflow is so well considered that your components will be humming away happily, like a flock of tiny happy hummingbirds. Thanks to the vanes and ducts that festoon the case, though, adding and removing components can amount to minor surgery. However, if you're an infrequent modder, you'll be treated to a quiet, civilised computing experience. We're also quite enamoured with the satisfying clunk of the chunky door.

PCFormat Verdict 90

7 SILVERSTONE TJ05B £82

ScanComputers
www.scan.co.uk
4xUSB, 1x FireWire headphone and mic
4x optical
8x hard drive
Thumbscrews

The beguilingly smooth curve of the drive bay door is the first thing that catches the eye, but that isn't where the smart design finishes. The entire fascia swings open at the turn of a key, allowing you to install and remove any 5.25-inch drives you fancy with the minimum of fuss. Nice and easy. It all feels reassuringly solid and looks rather sexy (as cases go) with its glorious brushed metal finish. You'll never find yourself short of spare USB ports, either.

PCFormat Verdict 82

8 3XS ISOTOPE IX £206

ScanComputers
www.scan.co.uk
LCD temp display, 2xUSB, 1x FireWire headphone and mic
1x optical
3x hard drive
No

This is one case that you'll want sitting next to you on your desk. It's the most interesting, unique and altogether cool-looking chassis we've ever seen. Getting at the insides is a simple matter of removing the four panels surrounding it, but the hard drive bays are awkwardly located under the motherboard. Add ins more than one and you've got some toasty drives heating the underside of your mobo. Pure distilled style... but your wallet won't thank you for it.

PCFormat Verdict 81

READER PROJECT

I built this...

Forget your beige boxes and cast your eyes over a case mod with a dimensional difference

Kris Parker spends his days working for a website company in Suffolk. When not saving the internet he can usually be found taking photos, gaming or watching motor racing. www.magnum.com

PCFormat. Why build a TARDIS? Are you a massive *Dr Who* fan?
Kris: I named my machine the TARDIS on my network, just as the PR machine had kicked off for the return of the Doctor. I'm not a massive *Doctor Who* fan, although I appear to be the only person enjoying *Torchwood*.

Why Mini-ITX?
It's the perfect size for the TARDIS but the downside is the reduction in speed. If I wanted to put a full size ATX motherboard into the TARDIS it would end up being about 40cm square and just under a metre high – too big for my desk.

How did you go about getting the scale right so that it fits in the case?
The scale was based on getting it as small as possible using the components I had, and crossing my fingers that it would fit on my desk. The entire design is based around the motherboard. I knew there would be plenty of room around the motherboard for components having roughly sketched it out. I'd found some plans for a TARDIS on the internet, so once I had the dimensions of the motherboard, I knew the internal width of the case. From that I could scale the plan measurements to what I needed them to be.

You kept stopping during construction to make sure everything would fit. Is this essential to any building project?
I was paranoid about wasting hours on something that wouldn't fit. It didn't mean I completely avoided mistakes, but I probably caught a few before they turned into something much worse.

How much fun is it mounting electrical components onto wood?
Mounting electrical components is easy: a few holes, a dash of hot glue and you could probably fix anything to wood. I was a little on the cautious side with some of my measurements to make sure any expansion of the wood wouldn't snap a component, meaning some of the mounts are a little loose, but I haven't noticed any expansion problems so far.

You never intended this to be a gaming computer, but with the end results looking so damn cool, aren't you tempted to upgrade it?
It's frustrating that I can't use it as my main PC because it does look pretty good, but until there's an 18cm motherboard that can run XP it's a bit of a no go. If I could get a more powerful motherboard at that size, I'd put a hinged door on the back of the case and fit a couple of 120mm fans to it for cooling.

What plans do you have for the future?
I've got a few ideas for new mods, mostly based around cars and motor racing. I've sketched ideas for a GT40, Mark 1 Ford Escort and a Formula 1 mod, but haven't started anything. I'm planning a serious system upgrade at the moment, and not being able to happily run the *Splinter Cell Double Agent* demo really annoyed me ¤

Above: Take one TARDIS, fill it with kit and the only thing missing is the Doctor's attractive lady assistant

"A dash of hot glue and you could probably fix anything to wood"

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